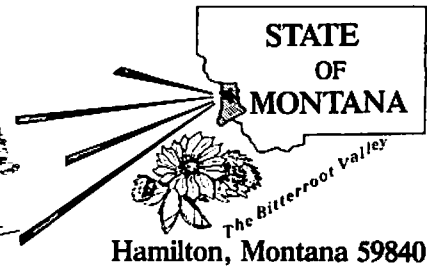
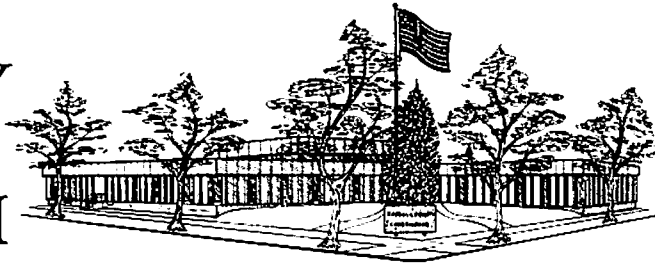


COUNTY OF RAVALLI



**Ravalli County Commissioners
215 South 4th Street, Suite A
Hamilton, MT 59840
406-375-6500
Fax 406-375-6507**

February 2, 2009

Representative Elsie Arntzen, Chair
House Local Government Committee
PO Box 200401
Helena, MT 59620-0401

Dear Representative Arntzen, Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Ravalli County supports House Bill 331. The purpose of House Bill 331 is to authorize and set rule-making parameters for the Department of Public Health and Human Services to establish fees for the licensing and inspection of food establishments, public accommodations, trailer parks, and campgrounds.

The approximate 40,000 residents of Ravalli County comprise over 4% of Montana's population. It costs Ravalli County about \$90,000 each year to conduct our licensed establishment program. In 2008, we generated about \$30,000 from fees. This covered only 37% of our costs in administering our program. Therefore, in 2008, **\$59,385 of tax payer money** was spent to supplement the cost of the program in Ravalli County. Our three year average (2006-2008) revenue from this program was only about \$20,000, covering only 22% of our cost. Our revenues from this program are so poor compared to the cost of administering the program, the Board of County Commissioners actually considered severing the contract with the State of Montana.

Allowing local regulators to participate in the rule making process by taking these fees out of statute and placing them into rule is invaluable. This legislation would also allow for a greater assessment of the actual cost of protecting public health through the licensed establishment program. Also of note is that all other fees, local or other, are set in rule as opposed to statute, as are fees in other states. Having the fees established in rule also helps avoid "one-size fits all" fees for our diverse counties.


Finally, this program is essential to protecting public health. Through this program, our food supply is protected and many foodborne illnesses are prevented through proper

training of food handling. Consumers continue to be protected from unsanitary conditions in public establishments by the enforcement of public health laws surrounding drinking water, sewage disposal, and pest control. Adequate funding of this program will ensure the licensed establishment program will be a high priority.

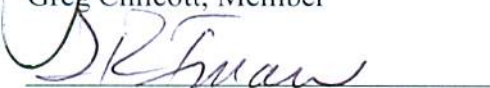
Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We urge you to support House Bill 331.

Sincerely,

RAVALLI COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Carlotta Grandstaff, Chairman
Chairman


Greg Chilcott, Member


J.R. Iman, Member


James E. Rokosch, Vice-


Kathleen Driscoll, Member